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# Analysts Fault Carter on Afghanistan

The professionals who watch Soviet moves have a disturbing explanation for the invasion of Afghanistan, but their superiors aren't likely to submit it to the White House. The reason: Nobody wants to hand President Carter an analysis that blames him for precipitating the Soviet intervention.

Yet the secret analysis demands the urgent and objective attention of the White House. Otherwise, the experts warn that the Russians can be expected to drive deeper into the vital Persian Gulf oil region. I have offered, therefore, to publish their unwelcome conclusions, hoping someone will be brave enough to show them to the president.

These conclusions are not the wild guesses of eggheads who suck them out of their thumbs. They have access to elaborate intelligence detailing what goes on inside the Kremlin. The conversations of Kremlin leaders have been intercepted, and their personalities have been closely analyzed. "I know Leonid Brezhnev better than I know my own father," one analyst told me.

According to expert opinion, the Kremlin czars are crafty but cautious old men who have a wary respect for American military, industrial and economic power. They will push, however, into any world power vacuum where they find the resistance weak. Carter has left them with several vacuums.

The United States dominated the oil heartland when Carter took charge of American foreign policy in 1977. The world's two largest oil exporters, Saudi Arabia and Iran, were solid American allies. Then the Soviets began testing Carter's mettle.

In 1978, the Soviets dispatched a

Cuban military force to Ethiopia directly across the Red Sea from the Saudi oil kingdom. The Cubans, 20,000 strong, were trained, armed and subsidized by the Soviet Union. Soviet advisers, meanwhile, replaced American advisers in Addis Ababa. The analysts note that Egypt's President Anwar Sadat tried in vain to arouse Carter to action.

Encouraged by Carter's restraint, the Kremlin sent 500 Cuban shock troops to consolidate its hold on South Yemen in the toe of the Arabian peninsula. The Cubans, acting on Soviet signals, spearheaded an attack upon North Yemen. This set off alarms in neighboring Saudi Arabia, whose ruling sheiks appealed to Carter for military support. He rushed over a dozen unarmed F15 fighter planes.

The Saudis, as much in exasperation as desperation, made approaches to Moscow through Syria and Iraq. The Russians couldn't resist the chance to exacerbate Saudi-American relations. They took credit with the Saudis for calling off the fighting in Yemen.

Belatedly, Carter sent military aid to North Yemen, but it was too little and too late. North Yemen preferred to take out insurance in Moscow by signing an arms pact with the Soviet Union. There are intelligence reports, meanwhile, that the Russians have set up an underground movement operating out of South Yemen to overthrow the Saudi monarchy.

But it was Carter's mishandling of the Iranian crisis, say the analysts, that persuaded the Soviets it would be safe to take over Afghanistan. He failed to bolster the shah or establish a substitute government, acceptable to the United

States, in time to save Iran. During the last days of the shah, Carter ordered a carrier task force into the Persian Gulf but then canceled the order. The task force, headed by the USS Constellation, dropped anchor in Singapore.

In contrast, the Soviets didn't hesitate to airlift troops into Afghanistan to execute a recalcitrant leader and to install a more pliant president in his place. Yet Afghanistan isn't nearly the prize that Iran is, with its fabulous oil fields and access to the Persian Gulf.

The Kremlin leaders, for all their canny caution, are simply more willing than Carter to use military power to advance Soviet interests.

Footnote: In fairness, Soviet expansion into western spheres of influence began before Carter became president. The men of Muscovy correctly calculated that the U.S. defeat in Vietnam had sapped the American will to defend faraway lands.

The Russians moved quickly into the Vietnam vacuum, shouldering aside the Chinese who struggled briefly for position. Today, the Soviet presence in Vietnam exceeds in both influence and dimension the American contingent before the Gulf of Tonkin incident.

Before Carter's time, the Kremlin also dispatched Cuban shock troops into the former Portuguese colony of Angola to pluck off a prize African plum. This was naked aggression, not part of the black revolution in Africa. In fact, the Cubans put down a revolt by black leaders in 1977 and installed a Marxist regime headed by whites and mulattos. Today, Angola is patrolled by 25,000 Cuban troops who take their orders from Moscow.